



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 24th INFANTRY DIVISION (MECH) and FORT RILEY
FORT RILEY, KANSAS 66442-5000

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

AFZN-GA-AS

18 February 2006

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Fort Riley Retiree Council

Call to Order: A meeting of the Fort Riley Retiree Council was called to order by the chairperson, BG (Ret) Dayle Williamson, USA, at 1023 hours on 18 February 2006.

Invocation: BG (Ret) Tom Kennedy, USA, offered the invocation and pledge of allegiance.

Introductions were made around the table.

Minutes: The minutes of the council's meeting on 1 October 2005 were approved with one change. Gaston Catalan's rank was listed as SFC (Ret) and is corrected to MSG (Ret).

Announcements:

BG Williamson thanked LTC (Ret) Jack Hoagland, USA, for coordinating the inaugural Christmas social event. Many thanks to all who attended, it was very successful, and we will plan on having this each year.

BG Kennedy announced that the Kansas Prayer Breakfast is just about sold out, with about 1000 people registered to attend. It will be held on March 3, 2006. Recommend that if you are planning to attend, you should register for your tickets right away to guarantee good seating. BG Williamson remarked that this is the longest running prayer breakfast in the country.

Committee Reports:

Chairperson's Remarks: BG Williamson provided some projections about the veteran population in the U.S. The estimated veteran population in 2000 was 27 million. This will decrease to about 14 million in 2033; projected to lose 700,000 veterans in 2006 alone.

Veteran health care outscored private health care again. The VA has done very well, with widespread positive reviews. In the current appropriation for veterans, the VA received additional money, and the 2007 budget will also increase in order to cover projected shortfalls. It's estimated that between 2005-2007 there will be an additional 266,000 veterans with disabilities.

MAJ (Ret) Max McAllister, USA, added that co-pays for prescription are also rising, but will not apply to veterans with disabilities rated over 50%. BG Williamson also noted that co-pays have been proposed for Priority 7 and 8 veterans (refer to buff colored handout.)

Submission of Issues to the Chief of Staff of the Army Retiree Council: BG Kennedy noted that SGM (Ret) Frank Vovk, USA, asked to consider the issue of raising the mileage rate for the VA from eleven cents a mile to the federal rate. Ms. Kathy Cunningham-Tucker reported that two issues were submitted to the Chief of Staff of the Army Retiree Council – both the mileage rate issue and Space A travel issue that had been raised by LTC (Ret) Marcellus Goff, USA.

Membership Committee: SGM (Ret) Joe Gilmore, USA, Chairperson, noted that LTC (Ret) Stanley Sutton, USA, would be able to serve his term, despite his moving to Colorado. BG Williamson noted we are in good shape; all positions are filled on the council.

Post Exchange and Commissary: MSG (Ret) Gaston Catalan, USA, remarked that the requirement to pre-pay for gas at the pump is a real hassle and that he can't imagine there is that much gas being stolen on post. The pumps also do not take credit cards outside.

COL (Ret) Verlyn Steinkruger, USA, remarked that the commissary needs about two million dollars worth of business each month to be able to do an expansion – that is the goal. Currently, it is making about 1.8 million dollars a month. MAJ McAllister indicated there are incentives to patronize the commissary; for example, gift baskets can be offered. Information should be available to mail order from the commissary.

Irwin Army Hospital and Pharmacy: MSG (Ret) Randy Merson, USA, indicated there was a possibility that TRICARE rates will be going up for those under 65 years of age. Ms. Cunningham-Tucker advised the council to refer to the article received in the meeting packet entitled ***Pentagon Eyes Health Benefits.***

1SG (Ret) Joe Wagner, USA, also noted that some medication prices have increased from \$9.00 for a co-pay to \$22.00. MSG (Ret) Mike Heronemous, USA, said this applies regardless if a generic or name brand drug. MAJ McAllister stated the cap has been raised from \$120.00 to \$960.00 per year for out of pocket prescription costs.

LTC Sutton, Committee Chairperson, noticed that Irwin Army Community Hospital has started billing other health insurance plans. His retired state employee insurance was billed, so Irwin is recouping some costs. He also noted that the new system at the pharmacy is very efficient. MAJ McAllister also noted that McConnell Air Force Base is also very good. TRICARE at McConnell will even accept faxes from doctors for prescriptions.

COL Steinkruger commented that there is a lot of construction going on at the hospital to include several modular units to house the medical hold company. This is for soldiers not ready to return to duty or able to be discharged. It is to ensure they have been adequately treated for their injuries or disabilities.

Legislative Committee: MAJ (Ret) Max McAllister, USA, and SSG (Ret) Carroll Everist, USA, Co-Chairpersons. MAJ McAllister reported that there would be a 3.1% increase in retired pay. Army and Marine Corps strength is on the increase, death gratuity increased to \$150,000.00, life insurance increased from \$250,000 to \$400,000 and there is a move for better medical accessibility under TRICARE for deployed reservists and national guardsmen.

SGM Gilmore noted that there is action pending to pass to children unused GI bill benefits.

BG Kennedy indicated there is a flag amendment that has a sponsoring resolution with the VFW and American Legion.

RAD 05 After Action Report: Ms. Cunningham-Tucker passed around photos from the 2005 Retiree Appreciation Day and the nice thank you card from COL (now BG) Pittard. Overall, the surveys that were received were very positive. Two points of concern – 1. Need two serving lines for lunch as well as enough food. 2. Although the idea was to incorporate the county fair participants in order so they might have a chance to hear the guest speakers, it was just too much background noise and distracting. This will be changed next year.

RAD 06: Ms. Cunningham-Tucker noted this year's event would be at Riley's Conference Center on October 20, 2006 from 0800 – 1530. Our Keynote speaker will be from the National Association of Uniformed Services, NAUS, MG (Ret) William M. Matz, Jr., USA. In order to add variety, she suggested that instead of the program featuring returning units from Iraq, that COL Smith, Garrison Commander, address the attendees concerning the changes currently being made and the future outlook for Fort Riley and the surrounding communities over the next five years. (He will be our special guest during the next Retiree Council meeting in April.) He will be able to address all the changes happening at Fort Riley in conjunction with the return of the "Big Red One." He is also the past commander of the unit that recovers remains from Vietnam. Kathy also suggested that another good speaker might be a representative from the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Materials from AFRH were displayed at last year's RAD; there seemed to be a lot of interest from those who attended. BG Kennedy recommended that we omit the presentation from the Kansas Veterans Affairs this year and invite COL (Ret) George Webb, USA, Executive Director, for 2007. Kathy also recommended that the IACH commander remain on program. She will work on inviting these speakers. As always, the health fair will be a huge attraction.

Newsletter: Ms. Cunningham-Tucker indicated the following have asked for space in the newsletter: Association of the United States Army, AUSA, Military Officers Association of America, MOAA, and Manhattan Chamber of Commerce. Articles are in the mill for RAD 06, the return of the 1st Infantry Division, changes and projected additions to Fort Riley. If anyone has ideas for the newsletter please feel free to submit them; deadline is April 30, 2006. BG Kennedy reminded everyone that it is not just about "Army" – and that all services need to be addressed. This is not meant to be a rehash of Army Echoes.

Calendar/Council meetings are as follows:


April 22 - COL Ty Smith, Garrison Commander.
July 29 – Mr. Roger Reitz, Senator, 22nd District
7 Oct – Pre-RAD meeting
20 Oct – Retiree Appreciation Day
2 Dec – Christmas Social

RSO Remarks: Ms. Cunningham-Tucker reported a significant increase in the number of retirements being processed and that the section remains understaffed, which results in long workdays. COL Steinkruger noted that he attends the retirement ceremonies and asks the recently retired soldiers how they were treated as they went through the retirement process. Almost all report they are very happy with the way things went. Kathy does a great job. Approximately 67% of the recent retirees remain in the Fort Riley area.

She also noted that Mrs. Gies had called to inform her that MSG (Ret) Jack Gies' cancer has returned; he started chemo in December. BG Kennedy offered sympathy to Kathy for the loss of her mother.

Adjournment: There being no further old or new business to discuss, BG Kennedy offered a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Motion was seconded and the council adjourned at 1143 hours.

DIANA M. CHAPEL
LTC (Ret), USA, Recorder



DAYLE E. WILLIAMSON
BG, (Ret), USA, Chairperson



KATHY CUNNINGHAM-TUCKER
DAC, Retirement Services Officer